

town settled by New Englanders I am informed by one brought up in it, that when he was a boy some forty years ago, it was a favorite piece of badinage with young people to address a young husband on the birth of his first-born, "Is it a boy or a child?" They did not know the meaning of the phrase, but used it in the way of jeering at his simplicity, as if he had not yet been able to decide the question. This is an example of the manner in which words or phrases, after losing their original meaning, still continue to be used and receive a different sense.

*Clavy* is used to denote a shelf over the mantelpiece. Wright, (Dictionary of Obsolete and Provincial English,) gives it as denoting the mantelpiece itself, and thus it is still used in architecture. Halliwell, (Dictionary of Archaisms,) gives *clavel*, *clavy*, and *clavel piece* with the same meaning, and *clavel tack*, which he supposes means the shelf over the mantelpiece, the same as the *clavy* of the Newfoundlanders. In French we have *claveau*, the centrepiece of an arch.

*Clean* is universally used in the sense of completely, as frequently in the Authorized Version of the Scriptures (Ps. lxxvii. 8 ; 2 Pet. ii. 18, etc.), and as still in Scotch. "He is *clean* gone off his head." "I am *clean* used up." The word *clear* is sometimes used in the same sense.

*Conkerbills*, icicles formed on the eaves of houses, and the noses of animals. Halliwell gives it in the form of *conkabell*, as Devonshire for an icicle.

*Costive*, costly. "That bridge is a *cos.ive* affair." I had at first supposed this simply the mistake of an ignorant person, but in a tale written in the Norfolk dialect I have seen *costyve* given in this sense, and I am informed that it is used in the same way in other counties of England, and sometimes if not generally pronounced *costeev*.

*Dodtrel*, an old fool in his dotage, or indeed a silly person of any age. It is usually spelled *dotterel*, and primarily denoted a bird, a species of plover. From its assumed stupidity, it being alleged to be so fond of imitation that it suffers itself to be caught while intent on mimicking the actions of the fowler, the term came to denote a silly fellow or a dupe.

Our *dotterel* then is caught,

He is, and just

As dotterels used to be ; the lady first

Advanced toward him, stretched forth her wing, and he

Met her with all expressions.

—*Old Couplet*, iii.